

2003

Searching For the Impossible Dream, Staging the Impossible Script

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Searching for the Impossible Dream, Staging the Impossible Script

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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May 2003

Abstract

SEARCHING FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM, STAGING THE IMPOSSIBLE SCRIPT

By Timothy A Brien B.A

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
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Virginia Commonwealth University, 2003

Major Director: Noreen Barnes-McLain, Director of Graduate Studies Theater

This thesis is an exploration of the novella The Malady of Death by Marguerite Duras and my subsequent production of this book. It covers Duras' history and influences in writing this book while at the same time gives an account of all my directorial attempts with this piece. With regards to Duras, the influence of the *nouveau roman* writers in the mid twentieth century and her relationship at the time of her writing Malady is discussed. For my part, I divulge my initial exposure to the piece, the previous attempts to stage the work, my latest attempt with extensive research, and finally providing self analysis with regards to this latest production. It is my hope that after reading this thesis the reader will immerse themselves into the world of Duras while at the same time rethink their approach to theater.

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Chapter 1 History and Herstory

The old saying “third time’s the charm” keeps coming back to me in reference to my latest directing effort of Maguerite Duras’ Malady of Death. This is the third time I have attempted to direct this piece and I have added to my knowledge exponentially not only of Duras and her intentions for this work, but to my own process as a theater artist. This thesis takes the reader through the path I followed and demonstrates the reasoning behind many of the choices made for this production, whether they were from past challenges or from research. During the journey I hope much is made clear and only a tinge of mystery remains, for it is this tinge which makes theater enjoyable.

Most people in the United States have never had the pleasure of being acquainted with any of Duras’ works or films. My initiation came one night in 1995 when the book The Malady of Death was placed into my hands and I was asked to read it as a bedtime story. When I first glanced at the words, it seemed like an unusual marriage of poetry and prose. Vivid images of bodies greeted me, but there seemed to be very little depth of character. This may have stopped others’ imaginations, but for some reason it fueled mine. I could easily place myself in the narrator’s vantage point. As I continued to read further, the sparse scenic descriptions challenged me even further to fill in the picture with my own ideas. It was as if I took on the narrator’s role and created this new world being revealed through Duras’ words. Because of her minimalist approach in terms of theme, I filled in the meaning which made sense for me at that time in my life. The trust on the part of the author to let the reader take an active part of the story demonstrated, to me, a great confidence in her skill and confidence in the power of her readers’

imaginations.

Before I was even half way through the book, I already had ideas on how to stage this work. In 1995, I had no formal training in the theater, except for classes in high school, but I definitely had a love of literature evidenced by my belonging to an amateur writers workshop while hosting the only monthly poetry readings in Rockford, Illinois. As I read the epilogue, in which Duras described how she wanted the work to be filmed, I knew it was more than a possibility. For the person listening to the story, it had the desired effect, as she was fast asleep. I crept from the bedroom, out to my car and drove home to reread the book in order to take notes on my initial impressions. My sleepy friend and initial audience member was an avid reader of feminist literature, so I wondered how I could be so completely drawn into the story. During this time in my life I was unaware that men could identify themselves as having feminist ideologies. It was written in such a way that I easily identified the narrator as a man and at some points forgot the story was penned by a woman. The “male gaze” seemed so complete and seamless: yet it was not a gaze which made the woman a sex object, rather, it focused on the physical aspects of a woman in such detail, she became a singular, beautiful entity against the backdrop of the room. For me, the woman was sensual, not sexual.

Now it's time to turn from my history with Malady in order to discover the person who made all of this possible. When Malady was penned, Duras already had a long and illustrious career as a writer, screenwriter and experimental film maker. Her biography is difficult at best to accurately convey since she thrived on having her life be a mystery. “The story of my life doesn't exist. Does not exist. There's never any center to it. No path, no line. There are great spaces where you pretend there used to be someone, but it's not true, there is no one there” (Alder 8).

We do know that she was born Marguerite Germaine Donnadieu on April 4th, 1914 in Gia Duhn, a town in the French colony of Indo-China (Adler 21). She later dropped her last name in favor of taking up the name of her region which was Duras. There have been many attempts to chronicle her life, but my focus will be relegated to the actual years she wrote The Malady of Death and her thoughts about this novella.

In January 1982, Marguerite at the age of 68 had already been married and divorced and had given birth to a boy. At this time in her life she became involved with a man who was many decades younger and a homosexual. She met Yann in 1980 and they began their affair immediately (Adler 327). Her other constant companion, alcohol, was ravaging her body. Originally titled A Smell of Heliotrope and Citron, she wrote the first ten pages of The Malady of Death while drinking six to eight liters of wine every day. After twenty pages had been completed, she changed the title to The Malady of Death. During that time she needed Yann to type while she dictated. Before the book was completed, she went for treatment for her alcoholism in October of that same year. Three weeks later she emerged from the hospital ready to finish Malady (Adler 336-339).

Looking at these facts was where I began postulating ideas about the text. If I had not known what was happened during her life at this time I don't feel that I would have had a clear understanding of the script. My original idea of the man did not include his sexual orientation. Other writers on Duras noted this connection. Hill wrote "Duras explores the sexual relationship between a homosexual man - though not explicitly named as such in either text - and a compliant heterosexual woman" (Hill 138). If I had read this before reading Duras' biography I would have thought that Hill was trying to read more into the text than necessary. Arguably, this novella

could be taken as a glimpse of her life at the time. Comparing the two, we have Duras and her companion Yann, she is many years his senior and he is openly homosexual, yet they still have a sexual relationship. In Malady we have a man who has never experienced the love of a woman having a sexual relationship with a woman who is familiar with death. Duras countered this idea, however, when she wrote, “The book is not so much the result of an actual experience as an intuition” (Practicalities 34). Again it is difficult to know the mind of Duras especially since the last quotation was written in 1987, yet when Yann read it to her after it had been published in 1982, she told him that, “it was a book for him, a private act, a gesture for him alone” (Adler 340). This would suggest that it may have been some sort of tribute to their relationship.

The next area of discussion is the performative intent of this novella. Duras had experience with experimental films in the late seventies, so it would seem that this novella would head in that direction. Peter Handke was one of the first people to do a film adaptation of the novella. This adaptation was more about the death wish instead of a reflection of Duras’ life (Adler 340). Jeffrey Skoller did another film adaptation in 1994 that accentuated the homosexual aspects of this novella. In Mr. Skoller’s film there is an exploration of the “male sexuality this culture has constructed. *His* difficulties with intimacy, to feel and express love. *His* inability to accept the unknowable and the mysteries of difference--sexual and otherwise” (Skoller Interview).

Robert Wilson decided to do a stage adaptation of this work in 1991. His production was translated into German and premiered in Berlin. Later it was translated back to the original French and the production moved to France. Mr. Wilson used the two person approach to this piece and described it as, “. . . two people on stage. It is a quiet work. In my production I leave a lot of space around the text. And the colors of the stage are very muted and subtle” (Wilson 1). Duras

supported the Wilson stage adaptation as she was no stranger to stage adaptations of her work.

This happened with her story Days in the Trees directed by Jean-Louis Barrault in 1965. This was the first play by a woman that had been performed in France in nearly a century (Practicalities 11).

Duras definitely does have an opinion of the theatrical adaptation of her work:

Acting doesn't bring anything to a text. On the contrary, it detracts from it - lessens its immediacy and depth, weakens its muscles and dilutes its blood. . . . An actor reading a book aloud . . . has nothing else to do but be still and bring the text out of the book by means of the voice alone. . . . the whole drama resides in the words themselves and the body remains unmoved.

Practicalities 9

In the epilogue to Malady she describes in detail how she would like this novella to be adapted.

Obviously just having an actor read the text from the book goes against many ideas of conventional theater practices. There is nothing "interesting" to watch, just two people talking about what happened between them, no physical interaction. This adds another layer of impossibility to the text as the first two layers deal with the contextual elements of age difference (or experience) and sexual orientation, this layer of impossibility is conceptual. What was Duras going for, what was her point to write this novella and then suggesting an impossible stage adaptation? Perhaps the way to answer this question is to let Duras answer it as she has in the past, "I am going towards the unknown" (Adler 340).

Chapter 2 Structure

In this chapter I will discuss how I developed the cast and how I reworked the script in order to impose a dramatic structure to this novella. Included in this section will be how casting affected my approach on the script and the challenges overcome. Also I will introduce the reader to the ideas of the *roman nouveau* writers and finally how these ideas influenced the writing of Marguerite Duras, specifically Malady.

A major challenge for this production was the concept of the script. After the research that I had done previous to this production, I found out that there had been other productions both in film and on-stage. There were no available scripts or screenplays for me to look at and I knew from my previous productions that I needed to do something to make the script clear to the audience. The original idea to have three people on stage was still the way I wanted to go with the production. For the first change I went back to my original script, meaning I broke up the script for three actors. Again the narrator had the majority of lines and mostly described the action that took place on stage. This script had the names of the characters aligned to the left. Looking at this format I felt confused as to who was speaking, so I put the name of the speaking character centered on the page and used a center alignment for the whole script. For me, this opened up the entire script in a way I had never seen the script before. Not only could I tell who was speaking and what they were describing, but it was easier to put in notations for various directorial ideas.

At this point it is important to explain who the characters are in this, the three person cast. Essentially, the narrator is recalling the action of the play from memory. He is an older version of

the man on stage. This creates two time periods, the one that has happened to the narrator and the one happening for the audience and the narrator. In past productions, I had never been satisfied with the narrator's interaction with the audience. This time I wanted the narrator to get into the audience and almost become one of them. This would create a voyeuristic atmosphere thereby creating a more intimate interaction between actor and audience. Also it would make the audience somewhat self conscious as they were also being watched by the narrator, essentially the voyeur being the object of study. I wanted to break what I had termed the "fifth wall," meaning, I wanted the narrator touching and interacting with the audience and on occasion ask what they thought about what they were watching and how they were feeling. We have seen the breaking of the fourth wall almost become a convention for modern productions and I wanted to take it to the next logical step, audience integration in the production. I knew that my audience would consist of mostly theater practitioners attending school and many would be able to handle this leap. In fact I thought it might be refreshing to integrate the audience since one can see the success of improvisation troupes and their integration of audience members who are not "theater people." The concept of taking something that works in one area and applying it to theater is what I wanted to attempt in this experiment.

During the initial days of this production and before I had handed out the script to the cast, Natasha Martin, a fellow graduate student, expressed concern about how I envisioned the three person cast. We discussed the motivations for the actors on-stage and especially for the woman, who had relatively few lines. Her concerns centered mainly around the character of the woman. She felt this character had no clear motivation or action throughout the script. Also, Ms. Martin found it hard to have the woman just perform the actions dictated by the narrator and felt this

made the woman, as well as the man to some extent, very two dimensional, mere puppets for the narrator. Another concern of hers was that the audience would not comprehend the two time streams. Ms. Martin understood I wanted to make this production very clear for the audience and she felt this was one of the items which could cloud the audience's understanding of the play. Her suggestion was to do away with the physical separation of the narrator and the man by combining the characters. While working with her on this concept we kept the idea of two time streams happening at the same time for the production, but the man would go out to the audience and break the "fifth wall." Going on this idea, I rewrote the script to incorporate this change. This gave the man the majority of lines, but also increased the lines of the woman which allowed her more interaction and thus the chance for the actor to add depth to the woman.

In this rewrite, I put the lines for the man that I felt were directed toward the audience in italics while lines directed at the woman were in a regular font. I did this because I wanted the actor portraying the man to be perfectly clear to whom he should direct his attention. When I brought this copy to Ms. Martin, she felt doing this was too controlling on my part and the actors should decide when they needed to shift the focus. The dramaturg for the production Suzanna Wheeler, a fellow graduate student, felt the italics were a good idea and agreed clarity was needed, but she also agreed with Ms. Martin that it might be seen by the actors as limiting. Since Ms. Martin was going to be acting in this production and I trusted her opinion I went with her suggestion and replaced the italicized sections with a regular font. Also at this time I was attending a class taught by her on the Meisner approach to acting and felt what I was learning in this class might be applied to the production. The aspect I applied from the class was to allow the actors to decide for themselves where their attention would be concentrated. Since she was a self

proclaimed teacher of this approach, I unquestioningly followed her advice.

Utilizing the two person cast, I wanted the message of a search for love to go further than I had originally intended. It was at this time I envisioned multiple casts for each evening's performance. This meant that I needed two men and two women who could play both parts. For each evening there would be different pairings representing different sexual orientations. By switching the gender of the roles I could extend this search for love to not only heterosexual couples but to homosexuals, bisexuals and even trans-gendered persons.

I felt the script needed to be broken up in terms of scenes. If I were to follow Duras' descriptions of the time of day and end a scene at that point, then the scenes would have an unbalanced feel to them. Instead I chose to break up the scenes when there was a major shift in either mood or necessity such as when the action of the script was moved outdoors. Since the script at this point was already at nineteen pages, my initial feeling was that there would not be that many scenes. To my surprise I ended up with thirteen scenes and this is how I determined the main focus for each rehearsal on the production schedule. I wanted to make sure these scenes made sense so I gave a copy of the scene breakdown to my dramaturg and she replied that they in fact did correspond to the emotional roller coaster this script creates. This dissection of the script proved useful for the actors as they were better able to memorize their lines while their understanding of the script grew.

In order to accomplish this feat I needed people that were reliable, imaginative, trusting, and invigorating. I started off my selection with Natasha Martin since she had expressed interest in doing this piece and I had worked with her in the past. Next I chose Shanea Taylor, an

undergraduate in my department, because I had seen her work in the past and was impressed. For the men my first choice was Corey Roberts, a fellow graduate student. I had not seen his work, but I followed my instinct after he visited a class at VCU and we had a chance to speak. Lastly, I wanted Christopher Scofield, another undergraduate in the department, in this production because I had worked with him in the past and knew of his work ethic. All of these people possessed a unique quality I termed as quiet sensuality. I had no special look I was going for, just people who were comfortable with themselves and their bodies. When I took a look at my cast, I further extended my search for a love theme not only to sexual orientation but to racial relations. Mr. Roberts is a light-skinned African-American and Ms. Taylor is a dark-skinned African-American while Ms. Martin and Mr. Scofield are Caucasians. The racial aspect of these actors was not a conscious choice until after I had all the actors' commitments to the production. It was at that time I expanded the theme to racial relations.

Before I asked any of these people to join the cast, I had them read the novella and then come back to me with their comments. They all expressed an interest in the production and wanted to act in it. This was my audition process; I wanted them to enjoy the work as much as I did before casting them because the subject matter and mood I was going for demanded the actors would be fully immersed into the world of the play. Also I was experimenting with directorial and blocking ideas which were new to me and required their patience as well as honest input. Before rehearsals started, Mr. Scofield informed me he would be attending a stage fighting school in the United Kingdom therefore he needed to drop out of the show. Immediately I replaced him with Matthew Shoffner who expressed interest in the script but never attended any meetings or returned any of my calls. So we started rehearsals with only three actors, but we kept the idea of

rotating the casts. After a few rehearsals and without warning Ms. Martin left the cast to direct another thesis production with another graduate student. She had discussed directing the other production while acting in this one before we started rehearsals and felt she could handle doing both productions. Unfortunately the way in which she informed me of the change was right after a rehearsal in front of the rest of the cast and, she admitted, on the spur of the moment. This lack of professionalism by these actors at first caught me off guard since I was under the impression that professionalism is one of Theater VCU's foundations. Unfortunately the lesson I learned from this experience was that casting those who seem interested in the project may not be the best way to cast. Also, I had a differing level of friendship with all of these people and, ironically, those who were the closest to me were the ones who abandoned the project.

History and Structure of the New Novel

Now that I have examined the structure of the script used for this production, I would like to move attention from this production and this script and focus on how this novella was developed. As stated earlier Duras is considered (although she denies this) a member of a group of writers known as the *nouveau romans*. Because of their break with conventions in the novel, one must understand why and how they broke with convention for understanding of their works and in particular this work.

The term *nouveau roman* translated means the new novel and that is precisely what the members of this movement were trying to accomplish. This movement began in France during the mid fifties and had a resurgence in the seventies. Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Claude Simon, Michel Butor and Marguerite Duras were the main proponents and practitioners

who created this new style in writing novels (Babcock 2). All of them shared a similar discontent with the way novels had been written since the times of Balzac and wanted to reflect in their works the times in which they were living. Many critics that did not understand or were resistant to change felt that much of what these writers were doing was simply removing the fundamental elements in their novels; namely plot, characters and narrative. Some of these critics even thought this new group was heralding the destruction of the novel. When one looks at the body of work these writers created we can see they simply redefined these aspects of the novel (Jefferson 2).

The plot is normally seen as the sequence of events which drive a story but for the *nouveau romans* this is not the case. They see a plot as “not the events in themselves which make up a story, but the meanings that are proposed to link them” (Jefferson 10). Nathalie Sarraute goes further and rejects plot defined with the Balzacian template when she writes “by wrapping itself around the character like a bandage, creates an impression of coherence and life, but also gives him the rigidity of a mummy” (Jefferson 16). What these writers were aiming for was a novel which reflected the times in which they were living. Having all of the events in a story interlace to form a “well made” plot left no room for the author’s imagination to take flights of fancy or follow a path leading away from the main focus of the novel. These authors wanted to show how their world was fragmented and at some points led to dead ends. They saw this orderly plot structure as representative of the times that Balzac lived in, but not of their own. We must remember the world was moving in many directions at the same time with the Cold War, the waning of French Colonialism, the rise of communism, loss of individuality, and the beginnings of feminism occupying the minds of these writers.

Another defect they felt in following conventional plot structure was it gave all the

answers, eventually. What the *nouveau romans* wanted was to ask more questions. They did not believe the plot had to answer any questions it posed for the reader. They felt the questions they experienced in real life had no simple well-structured answers so why should a novel attempting to represent reality (Jefferson 20)?

Lastly, conventional plot structure requires the story remain in past tense. In fact the French have made it a part of their language structure by creating a tense known as “preterite” (Jefferson 30). When an author wants to explore more than one time stream, they may want to incorporate events that are happening “now” and then switch to events that happened in the “past” or events that will happen in the “future.” A traditional plot structure does not allow for this to occur, so the *nouveau romans* decided to do away with this convention (Jefferson 31). Once again their reason for doing this is to free up the author so they may represent the world as they see fit rather than be relegated to conventions having no relevance in contemporary society.

Character is the next area the *nouveau romans* reevaluated. If we think back through all the fictional characters in history, we will find many memorable people. All of these characters have one thing in common; they all serve, single mindedly, to further the plot of the story. From the most eccentric to the most loveable, they all have one common purpose, to move the story. Many of them seem to be very well fleshed out and three dimensional, maybe even having the characteristics of people we know in our everyday lives. Since the plot has been redefined by the *nouveau roman* writers, a new definition of character needs to be created. They look at characters as anonymous and having their own point of view (Jefferson 59). We as readers cannot easily identify with the characters on the page because they are people we don’t really know. We are being introduced to them for the first time in the novel and we, as readers, should decide for

ourselves, rather than be spoon-fed by an author, how we feel about these new people in our “life.” There are three schools of thought in the *nouveau romans*’ viewpoint as to why this change is necessary; first as postulated by Grillet was that this change was caused by society’s change in its view of the individual. French society in the mid-fifties was experimenting with the ideas of Socialism while America was almost fanatical about patriotism fueled by capitalism. The idea of individuality and non-conformist attitudes was threatening to the way society was moving. The second school of thought came from Sarraute, who felt our interest in the human being had changed from one based on a superficial personality to one based on inner psychology. People’s motivations for their actions are not easily analyzed or apparent and therefore characters should not have that infringement either if one was trying to portray reality (Jefferson 60). Lastly the third school of thought on characters comes from Butor who thought a character “is neither a self-sufficient entity in fiction, nor a physical individual, but simply a function which occurs within a mental and social context, in a dimension of dialogue” (Jefferson 98). As you can see each of these ideas on character progressively reduces it down to its barest essentials. A character is an interaction between the psychological and the social worlds through use of dialogue.

In order to further this anonymity of the characters these writers decided against using names for their characters, instead using personal pronouns such as “I” or “he”. For these writers “I” signified a spectator while “he” was considered an actor in the novel (Jefferson 98). Not all of their work reflects this change, as all of the writers at one point did name their characters, but all of them experimented with the idea of characters without names during their career.

The last major aspect of the novel that the *nouveau romans* revised was the very concept of narrative. Their complaint with narrative in the past is best explained by Sarraute, “In the

twentieth century the presence of an omniscient author comes to be read as a metaphor for the divine, and must necessarily be proscribed in a system of values which makes even a bird's-eye view seem unrealistic" (Jefferson 115). These writers posed the question if the narrator is drunk, afflicted by some mental deficiency such as paranoia, schizophrenia etc., or something else that would impair the perception then, must the reader trust the narrator's descriptions of the reality occurring in the novel? They also wanted the narrator to take on a new role. This would make the narrator a creator of the world around him instead of simply reporting what he is witnessing (Jefferson 113). These ideas tie in very well with the ideas on character, and since a reader does not know the minds of the characters unless they are willing to share them, and the narrator also has this problem. The narrator has to decipher what the actions of the other characters mean since he or she is not privy to their thoughts. This allows the reader to see more clearly how the mind of the narrator works in deciphering the actions of the other characters, but the reader is at a disadvantage because they only see the actions of the other characters through the eyes of the narrator. What this all amounts to is basically redefining the focus of the narrator. In the Balzacian novel the narrator knows all and seemingly reports objectively when in reality this narrator is simply the mouth-piece for the author. This type of narrator has an extremely wide focus. What we see in the *nouveau roman* is the narrator's focus is very sharp. They have prejudice and a definite point of view, just as if they were - and are sometimes portrayed as - another character in the novel (Babcock 134).

The *nouveau roman* had a significant impact upon Duras specifically in her composition of The Malady of Death. In many sources and interviews Duras claimed never to be one of the *nouveau roman* writers, but when looking at examples of her work, it certainly seems that she

may have been a representative of the group.

The major claim the *nouveau roman* writers have on Duras' inclusion into their group is she switched publishers. Originally with Gallimard, she decided to go with Editions Di Minuit and her first novel published with them was Moderato Cantabile. She already had a promising career with her former publisher, but after joining up with Edition Di Minuit her work crossed new boundaries. Authors change publishers all the time, but what is different about this change is Editions Di Minuit was the publishing house set up by the *nouveau roman* writers to produce their works. Duras must have been aware of what this group was about and their connection with this new publisher (Babcock 117).

Structure of Malady of Death

Since this thesis is about Malady, it is appropriate to examine the structure and how it is influenced by the *nouveau roman* writers. The best place to start is with the plot structure of this novella. First there is no obvious arc to this story. Events occur because they naturally would occur, they are not connected to each other to form a pattern. In fact if there is a pattern then one would conjecture that the events of the novella seem to happen, deposit an idea, and then recede, similar to waves on a beach. There is something that could be called a beginning and an end, but the events that take place between these two referential points do not connect. This follows the *nouveau roman* viewpoint of the plot. Events should not necessarily connect and the meaning of the events is more important than the actual events themselves.

The next area to discuss is character. In this novella neither character is named. Or if one reads this as a three-person story, the narrator is unnamed. It is interesting to note the woman in

the script is given the most detailed description. Another point is the man did at one time know the name of the woman but had forgotten it, while the woman remembered his name and told it to him, although the reader is not privy to what she said.

Another aspect to the characters is the narrator / man is always referring to “you.” This can be taken several different ways; first is the “you” becomes the reader and the narrator / man is breaking the fourth wall, so to speak, with the novella. Secondly, this “you” could be the narrator speaking to the man as if they were two separate characters. Lastly, the “you” could be the narrator from the “present” speaking to himself as the man who is committing these acts in the past. I have tried all three approaches to this idea of character and I feel that the last approach is by far the most challenging, yet I think it is in line with the style of the *nouveau roman*.

The last aspect to be discussed is that of narrative. When we look at the narrative in this novella we as readers must make a decision as to whom the narrator is and what is this person’s purpose. Identifying the narrator is no easy task. Once again we turn to the characters for help and find none. There are conflicting clues as to who this person is; one is that the narrator seems to know all of the man’s thoughts which might indicate the narrator and the man are one and yet at points the narrator actually says “I don’t know.” Another conflict is the narrator seems to be in the future remembering these events and at points is experiencing these events or noticing them for the first time which might indicate the narrator is with the man in the present.

Because the *nouveau roman* writers redefined the way to write novels in response to our changing world, we as readers must redefine our aesthetics since the old way of looking at the novel no longer applies. With this new style of writing comes a new set of criteria by which to

evaluate the work. This style challenges the reader's imagination and gets us more involved with the novel especially with regards to deciphering the meaning behind the events, the motivations of each character and understanding their point of view, deciding who is telling the story.

Because the story isn't "given" to us as it has been since the times of Balzac, we as readers must be fully engaged with what is happening and what is being said (and on occasion what is not being said). We play an important role in how the story is interpreted because each of us will probably come up with differing ideas as to what happened due to the personal experiences we bring with us when we read these works. The *nouveau roman* writers allow us to project ourselves upon their stories. For me it seems the writers of *nouveau roman* knew a great deal about sociology and psychology while being aware of the changing world in which they resided.

Chapter 3 Direction

During this chapter I will discuss how I utilized various directing approaches and techniques learned through years of theater education. The major thrust of this approach came from William Ball's A Sense of Direction while other components came from various classes taken with Noreen Barnes-McLain. Another area that will be discussed is my format for rehearsals. Lastly, character development that was influenced by the actors and dramaturg will be examined.

Rehearsal Structure

No matter what capacity I fulfill on a production, one of the first things I take note of is the rehearsal schedule. This is critical for the mental health of a cast and crew because too much and they burn out before opening night, too little and the production cannot go as far as the director has planned. One goal I stressed to the cast was we needed to peak on opening night and we did not need to be "perfect" until then. Opening night did not mean we were frozen but we should be open to new discoveries and new ideas. I chose to schedule a long rehearsal process in terms of total length but not in terms of individual rehearsals because I knew my cast had other responsibilities since they were all college students. Also, since the backing of the department was constantly in question this gave me time to make alternative arrangements if needed. After the casting situation finalized we chose to meet once a week for two hours initially and towards the end of the rehearsal process increased to three times a week with each meeting lasting two hours. Because of the subject matter and difficulties with the script we began rehearsals in April

with the idea we would do the production in September or October. This gave us about six months with each other and the script, yet it was not so intensive as to burn out any of the cast members. I estimated the show would run for one hour and fifteen minutes which gave us a ratio of one hour rehearsal time for one minute of show time.

Each rehearsal was different from the one previous but they all had a flexible structure to them allowing the actors to work at a comfortable pace while still accomplishing the goals. As we all know, actors and directors walk into the rehearsal space with the emotional baggage from the world outside. I did not want this to spill over into the working part of the rehearsal, yet this baggage can sometimes be used to fuel the work. What we did (I use the word we meaning Suzanna, our dramaturg, and myself) was to speak with the actors about the events since the previous rehearsal and allow them time to “decompress” from the world before we moved on into the work. At times we spent a great deal of energy at this point which cut into the “working” portion of the rehearsal, but I felt it necessary to do this so that the actors could expel this energy. Next came questions about what happened with the homework assigned from the previous rehearsal and if they had any questions about what was going to be accomplished during the current rehearsal. Following that, Suzanna would speak about information that she had found useful in terms of their characters and possible ways they could incorporate the information. The next step was to go into the actual “work” of the rehearsal which included table work, blocking rehearsals and line recitals. Finally we ended with rehearsal notes, a discussion of the next rehearsal’s goals and homework assignments. The time spent in each of these areas varied according to all of our energy levels. If the energy was low, we would talk more than be physical and vice versa if the energy level was high. In the end a balance was reached which respected the

actor but did not mire us down in philosophical discussions where no physical work could be done.

During the beginning days of the production when we were unsure of having a space, we needed to be flexible with our rehearsal space. We started our table work discussions in the room where we initially planned on doing the production. When we started the actual working rehearsals in the summer, we were locked out of this room. Initially this was a blow for us, so out of necessity we moved the rehearsals to Suzanna Wheeler's apartment. This actually proved to be a good move for us since the original rehearsal space had poor ventilation and no air conditioning. By placing the rehearsal at her home we found the actors felt more comfortable with the physical aspects of the piece. They commented they felt like they were in a safe place, comparing it to a womb. Another benefit that it provided was we had easy access to Suzanna's library and a place to eat meals either before or after the rehearsal. After the actors became comfortable with the physical aspects with the production, and the fall semester had started, we moved back to the original space for our final rehearsals. If we did not have this option, I feel this production either would have not seen the light of day or would not have gone as far as it did in terms of physical comfort for the actors.

Because we met initially once a week, I felt the need to keep the actors thinking about the script and production throughout the week. To do this I had them accomplish various homework assignments on their own time. There was no real way of telling how much time they allotted to these assignments, but when we discussed the assignments I could instantly see the effort put into the work. As the rehearsal process progressed, they saw the benefits of these assignments and the effort put into them increased accordingly.

Tools for Character Development and Analysis

One of the elements in the rehearsal process which worked for the actors in terms of understanding the story was the use of fables. I had learned this technique from Noreen Barnes-McLain in a class on dramaturgy while attending Southern Illinois University. This was one of the first homework assignments I gave out during the initial rehearsals. The actors retold the story in no more than two pages using their own words. When they shared these stories it served two purposes; first, it allowed me to see what they felt was important about the story, secondly, it allowed me to view the depth of their understanding. We continued this assignment throughout the rehearsal process and continually updated the fables as they gained in their understanding of the story. Another benefit of this assignment came in the form of line memorization. When one of the actors went up on lines, I had them tell me where they were at in terms of the story and continue in their own words if the lines still did not come. Combining this technique with the script breakdown provided the actors a safety net in case either one went up on their lines. Of course, as discussed in the previous chapter, this novella redefines normal plot structure so we had to impose a more conventional approach to plot structure so the actors could follow the script.

Another element useful for the actors was creating character biographies. Initially I learned this technique through participating in role play games such as Dungeons and Dragons and found the games were much more entertaining when the biographies were rich with detail. Since there is not much information provided by Duras on the characters in this novella I told my actors to let their imaginations go where they may to develop these characters. I provided some minimal guidelines in the creation of the backgrounds; the first being they could start the biographies anywhere in the character's life but had to stop at the moment of the beginning of the

script, secondly they had to address in their biographies why and how they got to the point of the beginning moment of the script. One suggestion I gave the actors was to fashion these characters close to their own personal natures so they could easily slip into the mind of the characters.

Another guideline I gave them was they could use traumatic events in their personal lives only if they had personally dealt with these events sufficiently. One item I wanted to avoid was making the rehearsal time a therapy session for the actors. Again these biographies evolved in the same way as the fables throughout the rehearsal process. The actors were aware of each other's biographies, however, as characters they were not aware of each other's pasts. Initially the actors did ask about the characters' biographies as I saw them. I knew divulging this information might color the way in which they would create the biographies, but I also knew they were looking for a format that they could utilize. My biography evolved as I researched Duras' life and past production, so I spoke in generalities. I felt the man was a homosexual who had never experienced true love. Because of this he had become jaded and bitter towards those who had what he wanted. The chance meeting with this woman was going to be his last attempt, and if it failed he would probably become a hermit or commit suicide. On the other hand, the woman had experienced love and took pity on this man when he spoke with her. She was not a prostitute. Rather, she was trying to heal this man's soul and saw he was at the end of his sanity. When the man did discover love, her job was completed and she left. Some elements ended up being utilized by the actors and others were abandoned. Some of the items in the biographies led to further research on the part of our dramaturg Suzanna Wheeler.

Corey Roberts decided the man was actually a demigod figure and created a fantasy world around this character. His basic premise followed the idea of the man as a demigod sent to Earth

to find true love. As this demigod, he needed to find a specific woman who did not know that she was a demigod herself and fall in love with her. To counter this, when Corey portrayed the woman, he decided she was a prostitute. This prostitute was not the image that is prevalent today. This person is interested in healing people through sexual intercourse, acting more like a priestess than a hooker as evidenced in Ancient Greece.

Shanea Taylor decided not to stray into the fantasy world like Corey, and her characters were very earthy in contrast to Corey's airy fantasy world. Shanea's man was a gang banger, hard nose, and boorish who was just looking for a kinky weekend and ended up with a whole lot more. When she switched to her female character she was playing a hooker who had been out in the streets for years and had very low self esteem due to several horrible experiences. In a similar vein as her portrayal of the man, her hooker was simply looking to make a buck and found something which changed her world.

The idea behind Corey's man and Shanea's woman worked well as we had a person from supposedly high standings finding true love with someone from meager origins. I knew it would be near impossible relating Corey's character choice to the audience without some exposition, so we decided this character was actually delusional. Shanea's woman would discover these delusions while reading his diary, which was a copy of the novella, thereby discovering the man's malady. To counter this, Shanea's male character is a troubled character who has had a hard life and never knew true love. This male is not looking for love but just another quick fix when they stumble upon a prostitute whose mission in life is to heal others through sexual intercourse. Corey's woman reads the destiny of Shanea's male through the use of tarot cards which is how Corey discovers the malady of death. Obviously these back stories are unknown by the audience

and I contend the audience does not need to know these back stories, but they provide motivation for the actors and dictate their choices.

Obviously Corey is not a Grecian demigod and neither one of my actors had participated in prostitution, so we needed to assist them in their choices. This is where my dramaturg Suzanna Wheeler was a valuable resource. Our first task was to look at Corey's prostitute / priestess archetype. We found an article titled "The Calling of the Holy Whore" by Diana Rose Hartman in the book Rebels & Devils: The Psychology of Liberation edited by Christopher S. Hyatt which contained all we needed to validate this archetype. Although the main thrust of the article deals with the collection's namesake, this article discusses the original duties of prostitutes. "The Hebrew word Zonah means both prostitute and priestess. Sacred whores were known as the Holy Virgins, priestess of the Goddesses Ishtar, Asherah or Aphrodite" (Hyatt 135). These women were not trying to become equal to their male counterparts, but they knew they had something unique among women, a nurturing nature. This nature took on various aspects as needed whether it was as the Madonna image or through sexual gratification. They could be relatively independent from men because not only could they provide these services better than their male counterparts, it was a lesser affront to cultural mores to have women provide these services. While the priest dealt with the intellect, the priestess focused on the emotional side in order to make those who solicited their services in touch with the whole being. Obviously these women were not "independent" as we would probably define the term, but as Ms. Hartman contends they were more respected than the prostitutes of current society.

As far as Shanea's portrayal of the prostitute is concerned, we looked at stories from modern day women. The resource we used was Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex

Industry edited by Frederique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander. These stories ran the gamut from tales of horrible acts done to them by the police in “Destroying Condoms” by Gloria Lockett to a story about a woman who used the profession to pay for her child’s medical care, “A Most Useful Tool” by Sunny Carter. One of the ideas prevalent in these stories is these women wanted control over the “exploitation” of their bodies. They wanted to reap the economics of sexual gratification through self promotion, only to find the hypocrisy of the adult entertainment business controlled by men (and quietly tolerated by society), denunciations by other feminists, and unfair / unfounded stigmas by society. We used many of these stories to break through the misconceptions and to give Shanea an idea of what these women wanted. Instead of using the spiritual prerogative that worked for Corey, we agreed that Shanea’s prostitute was in it for the quick cash, which mirrored her portrayal of the man since he was in it for sex and got something completely different.

One of the unique characteristics of this production was both actors played both parts which meant they had to cross gender lines. To my surprise, and supported by audience comments, when the actors did cross gender lines the acting was stronger than when they portrayed their respective gender. Part of this can be explained by the way Corey naturally leans more toward the feminine nurturing side which is very close to the character he played, while Shanea’s demeanor is very masculine which came through in the production. Since they cross lines in their “real” life it was only natural for them to be able to do this in the world of the production. Another reason for this success was simply we spent more time and energy on this aspect of the production. Suzanna worked with Corey on the female conception of his character while I worked with Shanea on the male aspects. Most of this work happened at Suzanna’s

apartment which provided our “womb space” and allowed all of us to be open about our past experiences without the fear of judgement from our peers. With only two actors and the uncertainty of a performance space we decided it would be best to only explore the most basic of gender ideas.

Directing Approach

When I decided to do this project for my thesis I wanted to incorporate a directing approach I had admired but never had been able to implement. The approach came from reading William Ball’s A Sense of Direction. My first exposure to this book came while I was taking a directing class at Rock Valley College. The instructor was the head of the department and directed all of the productions. I witnessed him teach out of this book and on more than one occasion go against many of its precepts. I thought it would be appropriate to utilize the techniques discussed in the book on my thesis production in order to test them out for my own edification. Because we had a lengthy rehearsal process with actors and a dramaturg who were excited about this project, I could use one of the first ideas presented in the book, trusting the actors’ intuition. One of the exercises Ball talks about is accepting the actor’s ideas (especially relating to blocking) no matter how bad those ideas are, and to keep on accepting these ideas. He contends this sets up a pattern. The actor will test the director’s acceptance by giving an idea which is “bad” to see if the director will accept the idea. Mr. Ball instructs the director to accept this idea so this will set up the actor for one more bad idea. After he gains the actor’s trust these initial “bad” ideas will fall away and the director can set up a system where ideas flow freely, are tested and then a pattern is set (Ball 15). The way I implemented this approach was by telling my dramaturg we would be doing this but not informing the actors of this approach. This was

especially useful during our “womb rehearsals” where we were exploring the physical aspect of the production. Since I was not acting on-stage, I did not feel it appropriate to dictate how the actors should display the intimacy the script required. At first, the actors were clumsy and we shared many laughs, but as the rehearsals progressed they began to know each other’s bodies and respect their individual spaces. The drawback to this was our “womb” rehearsal space only allowed us to view the action from one angle.

Another aspect that Ball speaks of is the removal of the word “I” from the vocabulary of the director. Instead of using the phrase “I want . . .” Ball suggests the director asks questions that get the desired results (Ball 51). This was a continual struggle for me because the easiest way to get the point across is simply laying it out for the actors. However, the actors could lose ownership in the production which would restrict the flow of ideas. One of the ideas I stressed is the actors own their characters, and since they owned their characters the actors’ responsibility to the collaboration increased. Simply put, I gave them a reason to care about the production. The level of their participation determined the level of their personal success. This did not give them total *carte blanche* with regards to character choices and at times I found myself bringing them back to the original concepts that they decided about their characters. For me, the challenge in this situation is coming up with the right questions. This is where the trusting of intuition becomes key and Ball implores his readers that everyone’s intuition is perfect all that is required is an open mind. A technique that Ball recommends is the use of objectives. If the actor is straying from their objective in the scene he either reminds them of that objective or asks them how the action relates to the objective and then asks for their suggestion on how to make the objective clearer (Ball 81).

The last aspect about Mr. Ball's book I utilized was his approach to organizing the rehearsal. He talks about how the rehearsal is a learning process and has three steps in his process: discovery, test, and pattern-set (Ball 59). Starting off, the rehearsal is a chance for discovery not only for the actor but for the director. When we started the "working" part of the rehearsal there was no premeditated objective that I wanted to impose upon the actors. There were ideas I wanted to see attempted but I was interested in what their ideas were from the last time we had met. We would start from what they had come up with and then I put forth my suggestions. After we combined my suggestions with their ideas, we would discuss what aspects of the work helped to tell the story. This continued on until we were all satisfied with the final product. Many times we had to go backwards and rework sections because new ideas would come up to solve various issues. Once we were at a point of confidence with the work, we rehearsed the section until it could be done without stopping. For me, the success of this technique lies in the idea of the actors having ownership in the production. Obviously this approach only works when the actors are mature enough to work on their characters outside of the rehearsal space, and these actors responded to this challenge almost every time. Another requirement of this approach is that the director's ego should take a back seat for the benefit of everyone involved. This truly respects the actor's position in the production.

The conventional approach to theater is for everyone to look towards the director for leadership. To a certain extent I agree the director must have control of the production but not so much control that other opinions are dismissed because they go against the singular vision of the director. If we truly believe in a collaborative art, then doesn't that mean all ideas from all of the members of the production have merit? How can one person be expected to have all of the

answers and come up with all of the ideas? A good leader needs to be in touch with those they lead, and the leader can only be in touch with those in their charge by first listening to and ultimately respecting those ideas, even when they may go against the leader's vision. My approach to directing this production is best reflected in the seventeenth proverb of the Tao Te Ching.

A leader is best

When people barely know that he exists

Not so good when people obey and acclaim him,

Worse when they despise him.

'Fail to honor people,

They fail to honor you;'

Be of a good leader, who talks little,

When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,

They will say, 'We did this ourselves'.

Bynner 46

Chapter 4 Production

This chapter deals primarily with my production of Malady at Virginia Commonwealth University. The focus is on the technical aspects and how they underscored the message I was trying to convey. Some of the ideas that influenced this production came from two previous attempts at directing this script. These will be discussed first in order for the reader to understand the evolution of the ideas.

My first attempt at directing this script came while attending Rock Valley Community College in Rockford Illinois. I was enrolled in a directing class while beginning my educational journey. After attending this introductory class I felt directing this play would not be out of my league. My contact with the Friday Night Writer's Workshop provided the opportunity. The group had acquired a basement space in our regional theater during Rockford's "On The Water Front Festival" and it was there my first attempt to stage this story took place. In that workshop production I relied totally on raw instinct. There was no research done. There was no textual analysis, just flying by the seat of my pants and believing everything would come together. Since I did belong to a writing workshop at the time, I felt (reinforced by others in the workshop) the author's words should not be changed in any fashion whatsoever. The format of the script needed to be adjusted so I could have three actors, but this was essentially the only change. The actual format of the script will be discussed in a later chapter. For this initial workshop production there was a narrator who had the majority of the lines: other characters include the woman and the man who, conversely, both had relatively few lines. Action on stage was dictated by the narrator who

was walking in the audience during the production. Actors on stage never spoke to or acknowledged the narrator other than following the directions dictated to them. I knew this would be an unconventional approach; the novelty of the idea appealed to me, but I had no reasoning behind it other than it would look cool. I wanted to set the audience on edge and give them something I had never seen before.

My choice for actors matched my other directorial choices. I went on pure impulse. One of my co-workers expressed an interest in the story I always brought to work, and one night I lent it to him. The next day we talked about the production I wanted to do, and he asked to be in it with his girlfriend. Immediately I said yes, and I had my cast. My co-worker and his girlfriend portrayed the man and woman with myself in the narrator's role. One of the notes in the afterward of the translation I possess of Malady states Duras wanted a feeling that this was being read for the first time and the actors should not have their lines memorized. This translated into no rehearsals, just a simple talk through of the action with the actors. My co-worker and his girlfriend had the script for a few weeks before the actual production date, and they assured me they would read through it a few times. What this also meant was all of the actors were to have their scripts with them on-stage.

When the day of the performance came, I had set up a mattress with just a sheet on top. The space only had a small antique light board with a few lights with no gels. Our stage was set off in a corner, floor level, with the audience being on two sides in risers. Other performances had already gone on and the house was about half full. Time was drawing near and my actors had not shown up. The group helped me stall for time by doing an impromptu poetry reading, followed by an impromptu monologue from myself about the excitement of a live theater experience,

especially when the actors fail to show. This went on for twenty minutes and just as we were running out of material and losing a few audience members, the actors rushed in, got ready and hit the stage. We did the entire script and the tempo was slow and plodding. Some audience members left while the show was going on because they were offended. One of the actors forgot their script so they were both forced to read from only one. I felt like I had won a great battle. I was misunderstood, I had offended and most importantly I got the show up. At the time these were the only things I required of theater. The members of the writing group seemed pleased with the results but confused about the material. They liked the story but didn't know why. They enjoyed the unconventional approach, but once again their understanding was unclear. This left me with a hollow feeling. I identified myself with this group and if they couldn't grasp the majority of what I was trying to do, then who would? At this time the lesson I learned was that I didn't know what I needed to know in order to have a production that would not only be successful in my eyes, but in the eyes of the audience who paid to see what I was presenting.

After a year's time passed and I found myself leaving Rockford, Illinois and going to school full time at Southern Illinois University where I studied technical theater. My focus was lighting design while in school, but there was a required directing class for graduation. One of the requirements of the class was to direct a ten minute scene culminating in a public performance (normally, it was only attended by those in the theater department). Once again I heard the calling inside me to do the piece so it would be clear and easier for an audience to grasp. Also I heard the same voice from years before to make it daring and "tastefully offensive."

The primary goal of the assignment was to demonstrate to the students the entire process involved in the creation of a production. We had auditions, rehearsals with required journal

entries, a directing concept for the production, technical aspects, and upon completion, a paper on what was learned. Beginning with the auditions, our pool of actors came from the introductory acting class. My main concern was for the actors to show up on time. I had no vivid picture in my head as to what they should look like (i.e. body types) except the woman should be attractive in terms of societal expectations. One of the pitfalls I did avoid was not casting the person I was romantically involved with, much to her dismay. In fact, two of the people I cast were not in the department and the third person was a true freshman. I wanted to use those who were relatively unknown and give them a shot at something challenging. Something about harnessing the raw energy these actors possessed and pairing it up with this piece that seemed very important to me.

One of the main challenges I saw for the piece was the depiction of the sexual scenes and how they would be played out. Portrayal of sex was the first concern I tackled at the opening rehearsal. I wanted my actors to become comfortable with each other and with what they were doing, so I made it clear we would only go as far as they wanted to go with this piece. Furthermore, I explained what my minimum expectations were for that aspect of the show. At the very least I wanted them to hold a position which could be viewed by the audience as sexual, but in actuality was not. There was to be no nudity, as was told to me by my instructor after she had read my selection, but a sheet would cover the actors on the bed as an extra layer of psychological protection for them from any possible embarrassment they might encounter.

During the rehearsal process the actor portraying the woman progressed rather far in her comfort level. We started off by just reading through the section and not having any physical contact, although I did begin each rehearsal with relaxation and light massage exercises with all of the actors. As the rehearsals went forward, she decided when and how far her partner would go in

terms of contact and responses to the words dictated by the narrator. When there was progression I let her know she could regress back to a more comfortable point if she felt the need. Also, I spoke with the actor portraying the man and checked in with his comfort level all through the process. He was the only theater major in the production and had no problem with going to the extent of simulating sex. I didn't want to impede his progress, yet I didn't want to pressure the female actor into something she was not prepared to do. Participation in this production was a requirement for the introductory acting class. Also, it was an elective requirement for graduation for other majors. Because the actors were required to participate I needed to make this an enjoyable experience for all involved.

My next challenge was to cut the script down to a ten minute segment. I chose to take the first ten minutes of the script because it introduced the characters. At this point in the script the first night is over and the audience can see the initial dynamic of the relationship. Just doing ten minutes of the script would not make much sense, but doing any other section of the script out of order would make even less sense. During this ten minute section the audience gets a good introduction of the characters and experiences the convention I was using by having the narrator go through the audience and tell the story. Looking back, I suppose choosing another piece might have been easier for the audience, but staging a piece I did not have a passion for would not have been as artistically satisfying.

Lastly, I want to discuss technical elements that were required in the assignment. We had to address and incorporate one design element into our scenes choosing from; sound, light, set or costumes. I decided to use all them. For the sound aspect I used a recording of the waves to reinforce the idea the scene was taking place by the sea. Under the wave sound I played John

Coltrane's *My Favorite Things*, specifically the live Stockholm version. My reason for doing this is the song follows and underscores the emotional roller coaster that reflects the emotional action of this piece. Moving onto the lighting aspect, I used blue lights to illuminate the stage. Once again I wanted to reinforce the idea the world of the piece is near water. Also blue can be a depressing color and I wanted to underscore the character of the man's condition. The man is depressed because he cannot find or realize love. Lastly, blue is a cool color and I wanted to reinforce the idea of the play taking place during a cool time of the year, such as autumn which is specified in the script. One other aspect to the lights was they remained the same intensity throughout the piece. Since I believe this piece is such a roller coaster ride, there needed to be a subliminal grounding influence. Set design for the production was a simple mattress covered by white sheets. This represented the emptiness of the man's world, both in its inner and outer aspects. Concerning the audience configuration, once again they were on two sides in bleacher style seating. Lastly I dealt with costuming the characters. The man was dressed in all black, a very tight T-shirt and tight black slacks, while the woman was in a flowing white sun dress. This was done once again to reinforce the respective characters' traits. The narrator was to be nondescript in his costume, so I had him in jeans and a T-shirt, basically looking like a common college student. I wanted to stress the "everyman" aspect of this character and how men go through this thought process.

The time came for the production, and my actors were early and ready to go. I had decided to stray away from the original idea of letting them have scripts in their hands as I had done with the first attempt. This gave the production more of a polished feeling, while sacrificing some of the "in the moment" motif that was my original attraction to the piece. These actors had been in

been in rehearsal for two months, twice a week, for two hours at a time, so when they hit the stage they had thirty-two hours of rehearsal for a ten minute piece. They knew their lines, and they knew what they were doing at all times. As for the audience reaction, again it was mixed. They enjoyed my break with conventional storytelling, yet they seemed to lose some understanding because of the unconventional way the blocking occurred and how the subject matter was presented. Before we began, I did inform the audience that this was just a slice of the whole piece. The section did have a definite beginning, middle and end, so theoretically it did make sense. We did get to the point of simulating sex on stage, underneath the sheets, and the audience seemed to appreciate the delicate way in which that was treated.

There was a time for audience and instructor responses at the end of the assignment. Unfortunately there was not much to work from with these critiques. They ranged from wanting to see the full script performed so they could fully grasp the story to questioning the need to break the fourth wall with the narrator. Answering the first question was easy, it was simply a matter of complying with the requirements of the assignment. The second question's answer was more difficult and got me to think about a full production in the future. At that time I simply answered I was trying to break convention in any way possible, even if it meant adapting the convention of breaking the fourth wall.

Thesis Production

At this point it is necessary to turn from my history with this piece. As you will see there is a definite shift from these past two productions to the latest production. That shift was caused by researching Duras' life and the production history of this piece. Because of this research, I feel

that much of what was confusing to the audience and to me as a director has been cleared up. Of course there still is mystery to the piece, but the overall production is much more accessible. By far, securing a space for this production was the most challenging aspect that I faced and conquered. Looking back at the previous productions, I wanted to add the element of intimacy which had been lacking. In order to do this I needed a relatively small space, such as a classroom or a versatile black box theater. Immediately I thought of the classrooms in Shafer Street Playhouse. They were big enough to accommodate about forty audience members while still providing enough acting space. Also I was encouraged by my director of graduate studies to utilize the space in hopes others in the department would be inspired to do the same. Following the guidelines set up by the committee in charge of granting space to Shafer Street Playhouse, I made a proposal for the space in February 2002 so I could have the space in October of that same year. In the proposal I emphasized the minimalist approach I was going for in addition to not requiring technical support. I also asked for the space so rehearsals could start after the final production of the spring season. This was done because I did not want to interfere with the main-stage productions.

After a month had passed and no answer was given I started to inquire about the status of my proposal to Jeremy Miltenberger, VCU's technical director, who I assumed was on the committee because he was in charge of scheduling rehearsal and performance space. At that time it was not public knowledge as to who was on this committee. I received no definite answer, instead I was told everyone was too busy to make a decision because of the main-stage production. Then I spoke with the head of the committee and head of directing at VCU, Kelly Morgan, and asked that a decision be made in case I was denied a space I could find another

location. He informed me the proposal was lost and I would have to make another copy.

Complying with his request I made another copy of the proposal and physically placed it in his hands. About a week later I was granted permission for the space, however I was not given a date I could use the space. I had requested two weekends in October for a total of eight nights. The reason I was told I had been given no dates was the schedule for the fall semester had not been decided. This information caused a lot of anxiety in the cast as well as being a contributing factor in the changes made in the cast.

Some time had passed and Kelly Morgan left the college in that same semester. Worried about the status of my application, I wanted assurance that my production would have rehearsal and production space. I was told all bets were off and I should probably go outside of the university setting in case the space was not going to be made available. Dejected, I informed my cast we would probably have to find a new space since the department seemed as if it was not going to support a thesis production they had previously said they would.

My search for a new space began. Initially I went to the VCU's reservation office and asked about using an outside venue right outside of Shafer Street Playhouse. This space had a large stage I could place not only the actors upon, but the audience as well. After speaking with the office workers I found out the space I wanted was going to be demolished for a new building. This led me to choose another outside area near the Performing Arts Center. This area had a Greek feel to it, the seating was built into a hill and the stage area was below the audience. Before I did a rehearsal in the spot I thought it would be very intimate, however, once I placed actors in the space it was disastrous. In the rehearsal, many people walked through the area, which meant I would have to build a temporary barrier so no one would disturb the action. Also, in that

rehearsal it was almost impossible to hear the actors from the second seating section. The idea of doing the production outside was scrapped after these two attempts. This meant it had to be done inside.

Once again I went back to the VCU reservation office and they gave me a room in the student commons. This room was more of a lecture hall with a steep rake for the audience. If I were to have used this room, it would have had to be done as if in a proscenium. I was given the space and dates as well as possible rehearsal times. Two days passed and the head of the office informed me I was not an officially recognized student group I would not be able to get the space. In addition, they would only be accepting applications from student groups which had a proven track record of high attendance. Finally, I was told it was too early in the year to plan ahead for the next semester and I should wait till the first day of fall classes and they might be able to fit me in for one night.

Disgusted with the broken promises by some of the faculty members in the department and the University I looked outside of the collegiate setting for a space. I still kept the pressure on to get a space in Shafer Street Playhouse since it was promised. My first stop was a local community theater because of a suggestion from my committee members. Unfortunately, they only produced American playwrights so they would not be willing to support this production, but they would let me use their space for a price. My next resource was a bookstore that had just opened and had a small space for entertainment. Again my committee members gave me this idea since they knew how badly I wanted to stage this production. After I had spoken with the management and inspected the space they would let me use I knew it would not work out. They were only willing to give me one night in November and the space was minuscule. Basically it

would only hold twenty people, while the actors would have no room to move.

My last resort was to apply more pressure to the department to fulfill their promise. I spoke with Mr. Miltenberger again about the production. He informed me that I should speak with the head of the technical side of the theater who also did the scheduling. I spoke with Elizabeth Hopper, head of design at VCU, about what had happened, and she informed me she had no information about my proposal back in February or March. No one had brought it up in faculty meetings. She said since Kelly Morgan had left, the promises he made to me had left with him, but I should give a copy of my proposal to a new committee that was forming in the fall and maybe they would approve the production. Also I should put a copy of the proposal in every faculty member's mailbox in case anyone who was using the space had a scheduling conflict. Complying with her requests I did this but also I asked to be "grand fathered" in so I could be able to schedule my rehearsals and know how much time I had to work with for my rehearsals. At that faculty meeting my committee members spoke up for this production and it was placed upon the fall schedule. Again I was told the schedule was not made, so no one knew when I would be able to do the production.

Finally when the schedule was decided upon, I moved up my original request from October to September so I would be the first production of the year and not have to compete with the main-stage productions or the Freshmen Discovery projects for space. Because my thesis committee members took my proposal to the faculty meeting I was informed that I had the space for a September showing. I took it upon myself to apply for rehearsal space since the time of the production was fast approaching. I filled out the required paperwork and turned it in. There was a new facilities manager at that time and he assured me I would have all the times for the rehearsal

space as per my request. To my surprise many of the times I had requested the space, it had been given to directors for the Freshmen Discovery Project. When I informed the facilities manager, he told me the Freshmen Discovery Project had priority. I then spoke with Mr. Miltenberger about this and the problem was solved by giving me priority on the schedule for the room since my production was scheduled to happen first.

There have definitely been lessons learned from this aspect of my production. First and foremost the idea of a back-up plan is essential. Every time something was taken away I was already thinking about my next step in order to mount this production and how I would present this to my cast. Also my committee members always had a suggestion of where to turn in order to get this production on its feet. Secondly, there should be continual communication and accurate record keeping throughout the process. There were times when I put documents into mailboxes only to find out that they were lost. Also, there was no communication between the first committee and the rest of the faculty. This initial committee should have informed any and all faculty members even if it appeared not to affect particular faculty members. Another idea I had was presenting my case at the faculty meeting on my own behalf so any questions could be answered immediately and accurately. Lastly, this production should have been placed on the production calendar when it was initially approved regardless of certain faculty members leaving the department. Because of Kelly Morgan leaving the department, everything seemed to be thrown up in the air for a long time and no one had any news or ideas on how to proceed. I could understand the confusion if Mr. Morgan was the head of the department or the director of graduate studies, but should his departure cause the whole department to screech to a halt? Also, similar scheduling and approval problems had occurred with past productions and the committee formed

by Mr. Morgan and Mr. Miltenberger was a direct response to those problems in an attempt to correct the situation. It obviously failed in my eyes and in the opinion of my cast. This severely hindered my production in terms of scheduling and planning of rehearsals, advertisement, and caused a great deal of emotional stress upon my cast and myself. We did not expect any special treatment from the department, but as a student attempting to fulfill a requirement for graduation I felt the professionalism that is one of the foundations of this department's philosophy was abandoned. There was no professionalism shown, and many promises were broken. The trust we had in this institution was irrevocably damaged! However, due to the efforts of my thesis committee, the fortitude of my cast and some quick thinking on my part this production was realized. As my brother Mike told me throughout this process "if it was easy everyone would be able to do what you do". So I take the hardships encountered with acquiring a space and am able to learn from this experience which makes the whole encounter valuable.

Because of the uncertainty of securing a space I needed to make the technical elements simple, yet effective. Starting off with my favorite aspect of the technical side of theater, I will speak about the lighting. One of the major ideas I needed to convey in this piece was the narrator's state of mind, specifically his depression. Blue is an excellent psychological trigger for this idea. Instantly when an audience sees the color blue some will initially think of depression or bad times, i.e., "the blues." A deep blue, such as the one I used, also has a calming influence and sets a sober mood for the audience as evidenced in this production. The audience entered the space with the usual chatter, but once inside the space chatter almost went to silence or very low whispers. They were not given a clue as to when the show was going to start as with the usual lowering of the lights because the lights were already lowered. Simply put the show was waiting

for them. They were not waiting for the show.

Another aspect on the lights was the use of the small tap lights. I knew I would not be able to use actual candles due to fire concerns with the audience being in such close proximity, so these lights added just a bit of contrast to the dominant blue. These lights were also useful for setting the border of the stage. As with the blue lights they were placed on small pedestals on a direct line across the room. For the dominant blue lights I used simple clip lights with a primary blue outdoor garden lamp gaffed to the pedestals. Using the lighting instruments as quasi-set pieces, they also were set at the cardinal points of a compass. One of the successes we had with the tap lights was that the actor's acknowledgment of them. At the end of the show, when each actor portraying the woman slammed them off, it provided a visual exclamation point to the piece. Because they were set upon a decorative pedestal, I don't feel the audience was bothered by having the lights in their presence; instead I had some audience members remark how the lights seem to disappear as the show went on. Another unexpected success was the shadow on the wall that added a dramatic presence to the actors in the space. The shadow play on the wall made it seem as if we had used candles in the space. Lastly the skylight built into the ceiling of the room allowed starlight to light the space. Arguably, this gave a slight out doors aspect to the production.

Again this was not a perfect arrangement. My original idea was to build a crude light board so that I could control the intensity of the lights. This would have been costly and time consuming. The space that was utilized for this production had no technical elements that I could adapt. There were harsh, exposed fluorescent lights hanging from the ceiling and large windows facing a brick wall. I chose to disregard them. Also there were sulphur lights outside the building

in the alley that I needed to shade from the audience. This is one of the reasons why curtains over the windows were used. Originally, I wanted to hang the lights in the air off of the existing pipework, but due to building codes this was not a possibility. If I had been allowed to hang my lights in the air I would have added another light to the plot and made it a red light focused on the bed. This idea came from my dramaturg because she wanted to subliminally add attention to the bed. The use of red indicates attention, sexuality and warmth, these are ideas that we wanted to mention in the piece but were not able to in this manner. My next idea was to use one-thousand watt halogen stand lights that could extend to six feet in height. This idea was discarded for three reasons; the first was that each stand would cost one hundred dollars. Second, the halogen light was just as harsh as the fluorescent lights. Lastly, there was a concern that the halogen lights would draw too much power from the outlets which made them a safety concern. Obviously I would like to do this production in a space that had flexibility in lighting, but I feel that because we did not have easily identifiable options we were forced to be truly creative and emphasize main ideas in the script. What we sacrificed in subtlety, we made up for in ingenuity.

Following the simplicity of the lights I thought a simple set would be inexpensive and easy to transport, but also psychologically effective. Allow me to take you through the final product and then show you how we got there. Instead of following a normal set design I wanted to create a mood that reflected the narrator's inner turmoil. There was a futon covered in white with a white sheet on top, and the windows were covered with white drapes. Around the main acting space there were decorative pedestals with lighting instruments integrated into the design. Lastly there were acting blocks for the actors to sit on during the production. Now how did we get to this? Initially I wanted to have three four foot by eight foot platforms set up together with two

platforms representing the bedroom and one platform representing the outside world. Because of the uncertainty of securing a space this idea had to be abandoned. What I wanted to accomplish with this design was to make the bedroom a separate world that the woman invaded and now inhabits. This would mirror her invasion of the man's life. The man / narrator would constantly try to escape this world and try to join the outside world / audience but always be drawn back to his former "castle." This sparsity in terms of set design is echoed in the script and the production vision of Duras. Since we needed to be sparse, we needed a new idea in design, we came up with environmental design. The idea behind this is to create an environment which supports the text. Every aspect of the major design areas must be unified and tell the story while bringing the least amount of attention to itself.

Another aspect of the environmental set design was the audience configuration. This was the first time that I utilized an arena theater configuration. Because of the intimacy of the piece and the size of the room, I needed to fit in as many people as possible without it feeling crowded. Also I wanted the audience to feel a little bit of isolation from other audience members so they could all experience this story on their own as I initially had done years ago. There were only thirty-five available chairs and a long bench, so I placed the chairs in a circular fashion at some points three deep and offset from each other so every seat was offered a maximum view. The bench was against a wall and had at some points two chairs blocking the view. This did not work as well as I would have liked because there was no rake for the audience which meant some members did not receive a full picture of what was happening in the acting space. Other audience members had to deal with sitting next to a lighting instrument in a room that had poor climate control. Still others sat in front of the cd player and inefficient air conditioners which may have

distracted them enough to miss certain passages of dialogue. Some audience members did comment that these sounds actually propelled them into the world of the production. The reasoning for this was hearing the waves and feeling the air was effective. On the whole, I think, these were distracting elements.

Since this is a multipurpose room with no technical enhancements (and many environmental drawbacks) I feel we did the best we could with what we had in the time allotted. Obviously, if I had more time and if the availability of the space would have been certain this would have been a more pleasurable experience for the audience. Looking back on this production, I would have liked certain items to have been made available such as: a raked audience, better climate control and the room cleared out so that I would have been able to place my sound console in a less intrusive location. If this space is going to be recommended for future projects then perhaps it should be equipped with the bare essentials such as climate control and an area isolated from the audience where simple technical enhancements can be controlled. In the future I will require that the performance space be equipped adequate climate controls. Also I will make sure that if the barest of technical equipment is not available or is not useable in the space then I will not use said space.

The final area of design I will discuss is sound design. Once again I looked toward Duras for what she wanted and then added onto that what we were trying to accomplish for this production. Since she envisioned this as a film piece, she wanted only the sound of the ocean with the occasional bird in the distance. I decided to stay with this idea for the action of the play. Not only does it set the mood of the piece, which is at times reflective, it also sets the pace for the actors to deliver their lines. When I looked at the structure of the novella, it defied the normal

prosaic form and lent itself towards a poetic reading. Poetry naturally lends itself more to a cadence than prose and the sound of the ocean provides this organic rhythm. In reading the novella, the sea is mentioned several times, almost as if it were another character that is omnipresent, yet only observes the action of the play. Looking back at Duras' connection with water we can see the references to the sea are not merely filler, but hold special meaning for her. Lastly the sea is reflected in the action of the play. The man / narrator continually enters and exits his space as the waves crash outside. He goes to his terrace, which overlooks the sea, to escape the intruder and comes back just like the tide. In order to reinforce these ideas the sound of the sea was essential to this production, since we were minimalist in every other design area. I wanted to add John Coltrane's version of *My Favorite Things* subliminally to the sound of the waves because I feel that it follows the emotional map of the piece. I chose not to do that for this production because when we tried to mesh both sounds it never came out to my satisfaction. If the audience were able to identify the music they may have been distracted which may have taken away from the overall message of the production.

In order to set up the mood for this piece, pre-show music had to follow a theme. I wanted people to come in and hear the story of the man / narrator before the action began. Since the theme is the search for love, I wanted to emphasize the man / narrator had only experienced eroticism in the past and he is searching for something more than simple gratification.

To start off I chose a song by Garbage entitled "Cherry Lips." This song, outside the context of this production, is about the objectification of a naive man with feminine features. It has an innocent "bubble-gum" pop song feel to it, yet contains deep lyrics. I was using the idea of the man / narrator seeing the woman for the first time and doing what came naturally for him.

The next song that reinforces this erotic idea is Nine Inch Nails' "Closer." The song's lyrics talk about copulation without emotion and reinforce the objectification idea by not naming the "other", instead it simply says "I want to fuck you like an animal." The original version of this song was slow and plodding so I chose to use a remixed version by Fat Boy Slim that sped up the song. This kept the erotic songs upbeat in contrast to the other songs and ideas portrayed in the pre-show song selection.

Another aspect of the man / narrator I wanted to reinforce to the audience was his loneliness. Once again looking at the theme of a search for love, I applied a connotative meaning that search meant looking for something without outside assistance. The first song that I used was Pearl Jam's "Indifference" which speaks about a man who goes up against impossible odds and comes back victoriously, yet scarred. The aspect that applies for this production was the man had tried before to search for love and only came away with scars in the past. Another song I used was Stereophonic's "Mr. Writer", which deals with a writer who has never listened to his heart when it came to writing and in order to find inner peace must write for the first time something truthful. Again using my own connotative definition of a writer, I envision someone alone who is searching for the perfect story that will bring them "home." The man / narrator is this writer struggling to find this inner peace and in order to do so he must be completely honest with what he thinks is his enemy, the woman.

The last aspect of the man that I explored within the sound design was the hope in the woman he meets. He senses this person he is objectifying may be the one who shows him what love is all about. The two songs used to do this were Mazzy Star's "Fade Into You" and the Cowboy Junkies version of "Sweet Jane". I used Mazzy Star's song because it speaks about two

people losing their individuality and becoming as one. I feel this is what the man / narrator ultimately wants, someone with whom he can feel this completeness which he defines as love. “Sweet Jane” tells the story of a young woman who is elusive to others as she waits for her man to come back. For this production I felt the man may instinctively suspect this person is the one he has been looking for all his life, but he is not sure, so he must pursue her.

Before the action I wanted to marry these ideas of eroticism and loneliness together with one song. For that I used Massive Attack’s “Heat Miser”. This is a very slow and sensual song with the sound of one person breathing throughout the entire piece. There are no lyrics, so this allows the audience to focus on the rhythmic breathing which matched almost perfectly with the sound of the waves that appeared right after the action of the play began. It is a minimalist song which also reinforced the minimalist approach used in the rest of the design elements.

For post show music, the same amount of intention went into my decision. Since the play ends on such a poignant and tragic note, I wanted to allow the audience to stay in the moment for as long as they wanted. Van Morrison’s version of “Send in The Clowns” seemed to be beautifully tragic. In the song we can hear him struggling for the words to sing at some points and then mumbling over other lines, much like the man / narrator does to try and rationalize his time with the woman. To finish off the evening I choose Chet Baker’s version of “My Funny Valentine” for the sheer irony of the title. This version was not sung, but Mr. Baker’s intonation was sufficient enough for those who already knew the lyrics. For the man/ narrator this is the only “valentine” he will ever know.

I realize that not all of the ideas that were behind my music selection would necessarily

transfer over to the audience's understanding of this production. However, the more sweeping ideas of eroticism and loneliness did get across, judging from audience comments after the show. For me, it was important for the songs to hold a deeper meaning in order to prepare the audience for what was to come, and to influence what they were thinking on the way out of the theater.

Chapter 5 Self Analysis

So with all of the research and the production closed, the question is: what have I learned through this process? Probably the most influential lessons learned are the benefits of research. After reading numerous books on Duras' life and writing style, it leads me to other research, namely the *nouveau roman* and the lives of prostitutes. Without these elements incorporated into the research and direction many questions could not have been answered and many avenues of discovery could not have been pursued. Along those lines of research I had the opportunity to work with an exceptional dramaturg who not only pointed me towards books but lent her home, eyes and opinions as well as constant encouragement. I have always wanted to work with a dramaturg since I attended a class on dramaturgy and this experience only reinforces that desire. It also encourages me to inform other directors of the benefits of a dramaturg and encourage their implementation into the theater world.

Another area of discovery for me was in terms of direction. I intellectually followed the tenets of Ball's book, but this was the first time I felt I could utilize what I agreed with and experience what did not work. It is important to have a cast with the maturity to go beyond memorizing lines and blocking. The casts that work best for this approach to directing must have a sense of ownership in order to be truly collaborative. Obviously this approach does not work with all casts and I would rather only work within this approach if I chose to direct again. One part of the production I felt lacked was in terms of blocking. The main reason it lacked was I did not structure it enough for the actors, nor did I introduce it early enough in the rehearsal process.

Although the actors understood their characters and the story, they were wandering around for the performances. When we went into the final rehearsals, I continually moved around where I had planned the audience seating, but we were about out of time for me to introduce a structured element such as blocking into the production. If I had added a structured approach to blocking I feel there may have been a backlash or a change in the actors' mentality since they had been given free reign for most of the process. So I was caught in a virtual catch-22. If I added blocking we might have gone backwards and if I didn't add blocking then they would be roaming. In an attempt to correct this I started to have the actors to think about why they were moving, but it was too little too late. In the future I think that spending more time on the blocking will correct this situation.

Casting is another area I felt could use more consideration. Because of the maturity of the script and the demands of physical interaction with the actors I feel my intentions were correct in getting people who clicked with each other and with me. Using the usual approach to auditioning has never felt right to me, and it puts undue pressure on the actor to be perfect while under an enormous amount of stress. What did not work about my casting process was that half of my cast were close friends. When they left the project I was left with what I had originally thought were going to be the weaker actors only to be surprised when they not only followed through on their commitments, but went beyond the level of which I thought they were capable. Unity of purpose and loyalty are very important qualities to me and it may have been too much to expect from those who exited the project in addition to the fact that they had other commitments. I made it a point not to demonstrate my disappointment in the rehearsal process with those who left because it would add nothing positive to the production.

The last area of directing that I felt I learned something from was actor relations. This was an area where I knew I was weak. My main focus on productions usually lends itself to the design aspects. One of the reasons I felt weak in this area was I had never been a strong actor. In the past I felt directors needed to be strong in their own acting skills in order to communicate with actors. During this process my belief had changed. Instead of passing along acting tips I attempted to be clear about the information I was giving the actors and then letting them incorporate that information. It was good to watch them digest the direction and combine it with their own understanding of the script. This allowed me to stand back and determine how clear I needed to be when I gave direction while allowing me to gauge the clarity of my instruction. Directors do not need to be frustrated actors, instead they need to be leaders who can effectively communicate their ideas.

As far as my responsibilities as concerned with this production, I took on more than one person could competently handle. Since I was trying new approaches to directing and dealing with a difficult script, I should have relegated myself to directing and producing while passing along the duties for design aspects to other people. As I have stated earlier my passion for theater is with lighting. It is an area I feel confident in my skills while being very aware other designers' limitations. One thing I did not want to do was to undermine a lighting designer so I took on the task myself, and this aspect which could have played an integral role suffered. With respect to sound design, this is an area I am new to but am very enthusiastic about, so I should have had someone else take charge of that element. To my credit I did receive some conceptual advice from Justin White in this area, but he was committed to other projects and did not want to back out.

Finally, what I learned was something about myself in regards to dedication. Through all of the challenges faced in this production I kept going. This was not without a great amount of doubt about my capabilities, and at points I questioned my continuance in theater. Paranoia set in at some points when I felt the department did not support this production as they had promised. It also surfaced when some in the production quit to participate in other projects. I saw forces aligning against me when I had sacrificed blood, sweat, tears and finances in order to see other people's productions come to fruition. Because of my experience with the military I held everyone to the standard they could not possibly attain since they did not share the experiences which built the standard that defines my approach and personality. This standard is neither higher nor lower than any other standard, rather it is based on a completely different approach to loyalty and camaraderie. It was hard to accept that very few in this industry share these views, but after this experience my awareness of people's dedication increased in addition to having more realistic expectations of the majority of theater practitioners. Are these expectations lower? Definitely, but then I look at the theater in a more serious light than most of my colleagues. When I direct again I will make it a point to voice these expectations at the start and work with those who feel they can meet and attempt to exceed these expectations.

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Vita

Timothy A. “Kimo” Brien was born on December 19, 1972 in Rockford, Illinois and is an American citizen. He graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in 1991 where he was inducted into *Who’s Who of American High School Students* in 1990 and 1991 and National Honors Society in 1990. He then enlisted in the United States Air Force July 9, 1991 and received the National Defense Ribbon, Basic Training Ribbon, Special Activities Low Brass Chief, Airman of the Month, Expeditionary Force Ribbon for service in Somalia 1992-93, and 773rd Air Lift Squadron Commanders Commendation. He was honorably discharged May 18th, 1994. He attended Rock Valley Community College in Rockford, Illinois from 1994-1997. While there he was the graphic designer and co-editor of the literary magazine *Vent* for the Friday Night Writers Workshop. He then received his B.A. in Theater from Southern Illinois University in May 2000 where he graduated cum laude. Three of his short stories and his “Theater of Anarchy” manifesto have been published in CyberBastard, an online journal. While attending Virginia Commonwealth University he taught Stagecraft, Effective Public Speaking, and Speech for the Professional and was a teaching assistant for Introduction to Drama. He also was the lead resident assistant for the New Voices program sponsored by Theater Virginia.